15:Routledge E-5 (1914-1915) 1919
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

172 Anyone who is able to go to the British Museum can see a typical specimen of an Easter Island statue, in the large image which greets the approaching visitor from under the portico (fig. 31). The general form is unvarying, and with one exception, which will be alluded to hereafter, all appear to be the work of skilled hands, which suggests that the design was well known and evolved under other conditions. It represents a half-length figure, at the bottom of which the hands nearly meet in front of the body. The most remarkable features are the ears, of which the lobe is depicted to represent a fleshy rope (fig. 58), while in a few cases the disc which was worn in it is also indicated (fig. 59). The fashion of piercing and distending the lobe of the ear is found among various primitive races.[1] The tallest statues are over 30 feet, a few are only 6 feet, and even smaller specimens exist. Those which stood on the burial-places, now to be described, are usually from 12 to 20 feet in height, and were surmounted with a form of hat.[2]

764 *Position and Number of Ahu.*—In Easter Island the problem of the disposal of the dead was solved by neither earth-burial nor cremation, but by means of the omnipresent stones which were built up to make a last resting-place for the departed. Such burial-places are known as "ahu," and the name will henceforth be used, for it signifies a definite thing, or rather type of thing, for which we have no equivalent. They number in all some two hundred and sixty, and are principally found near the coast, but some thirty exist inland, sufficient to show that their erection on the sea-board was a matter of convenience, not of principle. With the exception of the great eastern and western headlands, where they are scarce, it is probably safe to say that, in riding round the island, it is impossible to go anywhere for more than a few hundred yards without coming across one of these abodes of the dead. They cluster most thickly on the little coves and their enclosing promontories, which were the principal centres of population. Some are two or three hundred yards away from the edge of the cliff, others stand on the verge; in the lower land they are but little above the sea-level, while on the precipitous part of the coast the ocean breaks hundreds of feet below.

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[1] For an illustrated description of the method of expanding the ear, see *With a Prehistoric People, the Akikuyu of British East Africa*, p. 32.
[2] A full description of the statues is given in chap. xiv.